

The Old Paths

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"Our Influence"

Jarrold Jacobs

I am not sure of the exact number, but am positive that thousands are aware of me suffering a theft while I was in Africa recently. I know that people on at least three continents were aware of this event and were praying for me during those final days I spent in Freetown. I am thankful for the many prayers offered, and for my safe travel and return home. In thinking about the events surrounding the theft, I couldn't help but think about how the actions of one man on one occasion affected so many people! In fact, it effected people that may never meet one another on earth!

In thinking about this event, I also began considering what God has said about influence. The Lord was very clear that our influence is a powerful thing, and that it can effect people for many generations to come. Please consider the following passages, and then let us make some applications.

Some Passages Which Reveal The Power Of One's Influence

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous

God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:4-6).

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16).

"The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden" (I Tim. 5:24-25).

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'" (Rev. 14:13)

As we meditate on these words (Ps. 1:2), let us understand that our influence in this world is powerful! A word said or unsaid, a deed done or undone, can have a great effect on others. Yes, we can affect the lives of those we know and those we do not know by our influence!

How can I be sure of this? Consider for a moment the events from Genesis 3:1-6. Can we fathom the

fact that when Adam and Eve sinned, their decisions effected the God of Heaven!! Yet, this is what happened. How do we know this? Read Genesis 3:15 and read the very first prophecy of a Messiah to come. Why was the Messiah necessary? Because man had sinned! Thus, in an effort to save mankind from sin, Christ had to come to die as a sacrifice for all man (Jn. 1:29, 3:16, 18:37). Yes, my friends, the decisions of man affected Heaven itself!!

As we continue to read through the Bible, we see how the decisions of the kings either helped or harmed the people. When we read of David, Solomon, Ahab, Manasseh, and Josiah, we read how the nations followed their lead. Yes, the influence of men can be felt for many years. Need we also mention the deeds and words of the apostles? Think of how the work of these men continues to affect us today. Though 2000 years removed from the time of the apostles, the Bible's record lets us feel their influence daily (ex: I Cor. 11:1)!

Further, think about the influence of parents on their children (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). If the Lord wills, our children will go out into the world and meet people that we parents might never meet. How will they act toward them? What will they say? Will they have an influence for good or for evil on their friends and enemies? Too, is not this influence in ways also a reflection upon their training (the parent's influence) at home? (Prov. 22:6)

While in Africa, there was another time when this subject of influence really hit home for me. In this case, rather than the negative influence of a thief, it was the positive influence of some Christians now dead. You see, if it was not for Walter Dillman, and Charles and Nina

Neal, my grandparents might not have become Christians. Had they not become Christians, then my father (who was 5 when they were baptized) might not have become a Christian when he did, and might not have shown himself to be a good example to my mother and his children (Eph. 5:22-33, 6:4). However, because of these folks, my grandparents became Christians, as did my father and aunt, as did my brother and I, as have my children. Through God's providence, I have also been able to preach the gospel to lost souls for some 20 years, now, and recently was able to take the gospel to people in Africa.

I do not imagine Walter Dillman, and Charles and Nina Neal were thinking about 2013 and a grandson preaching in Kentucky, or Africa, or anywhere else when they taught the truth to a young Henry and Myrtle Jacobs with two small children (Mk. 16:16; II Tim. 2:2). Yet, this is what happened! Is this not yet another example of how influence plays a powerful role in the lives of people born and unborn?

In the Bible, we read of the work of Andrew (Jn. 1:45), Ananias (Acts 9, 22, 26), Dorcas (Acts 9), Lois and Eunice (II Tim. 1:5), and many others. These folks spoke and acted at pivotal times, and we today are the beneficiaries of their lives, as will future generations be. Friends, who will be the beneficiaries of our influence?

The longer I live, it becomes more and more clear that our influence is felt by others (Matt. 5:13-16). The question is will our influence on others be for good (Rev. 14:13) or for evil (I Tim. 5:24-25)? Consider this well! How will future generations be effected by our influence? (II Cor. 13:5)

"MANY FALSE PROPHETS (?)"

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Are there truly "*many false prophets*" who "*are gone out into the world*"? Jesus said there would be "*many false prophets*" who should arise "*and deceive many*" (Matt. 24:11). The Holy Spirit made a similar statement (1 Jn. 4:1). As Peter said, "*there were false prophets*" among the people of the Old Testament, and even so "*there shall be false teachers among you*" (2 Pet. 2:1).

But how can this be? If, as many people believe, everyone's religion is equally valid and acceptable, how can there be "*any*" false prophets, let alone "*many false prophets*"? The fact that the Bible says there shall be "*many false prophets*" implies that not everyone's religion is pleasing before God.

Even in his own day, the Lord Jesus did not receive the worship of each person. "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 7:21). "*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship*

me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:8, 9, 13, 14). The "*blind leaders*" were false prophets, false teachers.

Again, that "*false prophets*" exist is indicative of the fact that not all religions, not all "*belief systems*," are approved of God (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Rev. 2:2). Why do some say we may serve God according to the dictates of our own conscience? If all religious concepts of faith are equally valid, why did John say to "*believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God*" (1 Jn. 4:1)? Why say that if it does not matter "*in what*" or "*in whom*" you believe?

Since there are, as the Spirit of God says, "*many false prophets*," are there not also "*many false religions*" (1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:4-6)? That being so, what of your faith? What of your religion? Is it of God or of man (Isa. 8:20)? "*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves*" (2 Cor. 13:5).

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